

CITY of TORRANCE VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER



Coordinator's Welcome

Winter 2011

Welcome to 2011 and a new decade for the City of Torrance. While the City has seen its share of challenges in the last six months (see the feature on the City's budget), the Volunteer program begins 2011 with a resolution to innovate and provide even better experiences for our volunteers. Our program staff is actively working to automate the volunteer application process and to provide an interface where volunteers can easily update their contact information, log their hours of service, and seek out new volunteer assignments.

The volunteer program is also on FACEBOOK and we are tweeting and blogging too! Past, present, and future newsletter articles can be found on our blog as well as news about current events, emergency preparedness, and volunteer opportunities. Visit our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/torrancevolunteerprogram>. If you "Like" us, then you will get regular updates on your Facebook page.

For more information regarding our year of innovation, contact me at (310) 618-2967; send an e-mail to LLohnes@TorranceCA.gov; or comment on our blog at <http://cityoftorrancevolunteerprogram.blogspot.com/>



*We cannot always build the future for our youth,
but we can build our youth for the future.*
~Franklin Delano Roosevelt



Special Events

National Volunteer Week
April 10-16, 2011

*Torrance Theatre Company presents: **Over the River and through the Wood**, February 4 – 27, 2011; and **Moon Over Buffalo**, April 15 – 23, 2011*

*Torrance Art Museum Presents: **What's New Pussycat?** Curated by Tim Nye and Max Presneill.*

Also, for a behind the scenes view of TAM, check out Jeremy Rosenberg's Writer in Residence Blog at <http://writer.torranceartmuseum.com/>

Armed Forces Day is on May 21, 2011 with weekend festivities: May 20-22, 2011

The Mayor is scheduled to give his annual State of the City on May 12, 2011, an event that is hosted by the Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce.

For more information regarding special events, check the City's event calendar at <http://www.TorranceCa.Gov/16170.htm>



Volunteers Needed:



Social Media Manager – Centennial Committee

The City of Torrance is looking for a motivated volunteer with expertise in social media and marketing to promote the activities for the City's upcoming Centennial Celebration in 2012. While the Centennial is still a year away, the Centennial Committee is already actively planning. Interested applicants can find more information at <http://www.TorranceCA.Gov/3553.htm>. Also, the Centennial Committee's website can be accessed at <http://www.TorranceCa.Gov/Centennial/>

Torrance Art Museum (TAM) Concierge

Do you love Art? The Torrance Art Museum (TAM) is seeking gracious representatives to serve as receptionists and docents. A month commitment of six hours is requested. Interested applicants can find more information at <http://www.TorranceCA.Gov/3553.htm>

Volunteer Newsletter Writer

Volunteer extraordinaire Judi Gerber has left her position as our volunteer newsletter to pursue writing opportunities related to her passion for sustainable farming and gardening. We will miss her great features but wish her luck in all her endeavors. Of course, her departure creates an opportunity for a volunteer to promote volunteerism and community involvement by writing our semi-annual newsletter. To apply, access the Volunteer Online application at <https://www.TorranceCA.Gov/Volunteers/> and write "Volunteer Newsletter Writer" under the category labeled "other." Please e-mail a writing sample to LLohnes@TorranceCA.gov

Transit Volunteers

Our Transit Department is looking for volunteers to assist with selling bus passes at the Transit Store located in the West Annex of City Hall. In addition, the Transit Department is also seeking a computer savvy volunteer to assist with audits of the MAX Transportation system. Interested applicants should apply online at <https://www.TorranceCA.Gov/Volunteers/>



Volunteer Spotlight

The work an unknown good man has done is like a vein of water flowing hidden underground, secretly making the ground green.
~Thomas Carlyle

Scott Hascoup: Student Volunteer at the Marsh

Scott Hascoup, a junior from West High, started volunteering last year at the Marsh weekend restoration project as part of a school requirement to volunteer for twenty hours. But when he completed his hours, he just kept coming back. "I like the hands on work, and I like talking to the other kids, it's social."

Scott's volunteering has also given him the opportunity to learn more about nature and our physical surroundings. Daniel Marion, the City staff member assigned to the restoration, says that the weekend restoration volunteer project has been structured as service learning. "It's the trend in the outdoor recreation field to supplement the volunteer assignment with an educational component." Typically, the students assigned to the restoration project work for two and half hours weeding, planting, and clearing paths and then there is 30 minutes devoted to a teaching session, such as the weather and climate. So Scott understands why Torrance is blessed with our daily breeze. "The ground heats up, but the ocean is cold, and the difference between the two temperatures creates the breeze."

Scott plans to attend college and hopes to study engineering, and it may surprise him to learn that commitment to volunteering at the Marsh can also help him achieve his goals. As Daniel explains, there is a new initiative being designed for the most committed student volunteers. "We are creating an Advanced Restoration Crew of about 5 or 6 student volunteers. This crew will help us guide the restoration because we can have up to 40 to 60 students volunteering each week. This crew will also take on some of the more advanced tasks to support the work, such as tool maintenance." This new crew will be formed by the most committed group of volunteers and Daniel explained that Scott will be invited to interview. In return, the Advanced Restoration Crew will be rewarded with special field trips, leadership training, and letters of recommendation—all of which are helpful for any student preparing for a college career.





*Not only must we be good, but we
must also be good for something.
~Henry David Thoreau*

Volunteer Spotlight

Thelma Carr – Volunteer at the Madrona Marsh

Thelma Carr's involvement with the Marsh dates back to 1971 when she and her husband participated in the original fundraiser to save the Marsh from development.

And she has volunteered ever since. It's also a family affair, since her husband, Bob Carr, works for the City of Torrance and provides classroom education for the Nature Center, including a class where he suits up as Einstein to teach kids about the science of the Marsh.

The Carrs are long time residents of Torrance, raising a daughter who graduated from Torrance High; and both were long-time employees of the Torrance Unified School District, where Bob taught Science at South High and Thelma worked at the Children's Center at Magruder Middle school.

Because of her classroom and clerical work at TUSD, Thelma feels most at home inside the Nature Center. Her duties include setting up for the weekend restoration and receptionist duties on Saturdays. On Fridays, she works in the gift shop, which is a fundraiser for the Friends of the Madrona Marsh (FOMM). She enjoys feeding the animals, particularly the turtles, "One our turtles really has a lot of personality. I'm not really a snake person, I respect the snakes, but I just enjoy the turtles more."

When asked to pick her favorite thing about the Marsh, Thelma pauses and then explains, "We have a lot of different birds. When there is water in the Marsh, we see egrets, herons and all kinds of ducks. It's really a great place to bird watch. We have a very knowledgeable staff and there are regular bird walks." She also mentioned that just being around the Marsh is a great way to learn more about the preserve. "I'm not a classifier of animals, but I learn a lot just standing around and listening to the staff and visitors." And visitors come from all over: "We get people from the entire South Bay area, and the schools every year, but also people from other states come to the Center...we get very diverse mix of people and interests."



Thelma notes that volunteers are given assignments that suit their skills and interests. "People can find their niche. If they like computers, or animals, or education, they can use those skills here." It seems that Carr has found her niche as her service to the Marsh was recognized in spring of 2010 when Nature Center Manager Tracy Drake nominated Thelma to be recognized for her service during National Volunteer Week. As the Marsh Volunteer of the Year, Thelma attended a City Council Meeting where the Mayor thanked her, and 13 other outstanding volunteers, for their service to the City. "I was very honored that Tracy nominated me", says Thelma, "we have such a great group of volunteers."

But service to others just seems to come naturally to Thelma. She has served on the Cultural Arts Commission, she has volunteered to decorate the Rose Float for the past twenty years, and she also involved with Torrance community theatre. For the last twelve years, she has also been a member of the Torrance Civic Chorale. This remarkable woman has found so much opportunity to give and receive from the Torrance community over the last 40 years in Torrance. And it all began with a determined effort to save the Marsh.



Volunteer News

It's All Happening at the Marsh

Looking for some new activities to pursue outside this winter? The rainy season is a great time to visit the Marsh and the Madrona Nature Center hosts a variety of free programs on a regular basis:

- Mornings on the Marsh – from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on the second Tuesday of every month, Bart Tendick hosts a leisurely stroll on the Madrona Marsh where participants can learn all about this vernal marsh.
- Join the Propagation Society – meets every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Free sessions include instruction on preparing soil for planting; collecting and cleaning seeds, pruning for native plants.
- The Birds of Madrona – A Walk with Bob Shanman –this walk for both avid and beginning birders is held on the second Wednesday of every month from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.



In addition to these free activities, the Marsh also hosts special workshops for reasonable prices. For example, in October of 2010, the Marsh hosted a Plein Air Workshop with Ron Libbrecht that was open to all ages and abilities. Also, Second Science Sunday is every month at a low cost of \$5.00 per person or \$10.00 per families.

Artists also exhibit regularly in the Nature Center. In fall of 2010, exhibiting artists included photographers Beth Shibata and Paul Blieden. Receptions were held each exhibit and the artists both spoke about their work. This winter, artist Al Hagan and the Pacific Arts Group will be featured at a reception on February 18, 2011 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The exhibit is entitled "Pacific Arts Group Paints the Marsh." The community is invited and refreshments will be served. Admission is free.

So whatever your interest may be, check out the programming at the Madrona Marsh.

More information can be found at <http://www.TorranceCa.Gov/Parks/6618.htm> or visit the Madrona Nature Center and Preserve located at 3201 Plaza del Amo.



About Your City Government

About Your City: The City trims \$14.5 million from FY 2010-11 Budget.

In spring of 2010, the Mayor and City Council made difficult choices, cutting \$8.9 million from the second year of the City's two-year budget. In September, as the City closed the financial reporting period for FY 2009-10, the Mayor and Council had to make another \$5.5 million in budget reductions after actual revenues received fell short of projections. Like many other cities, Torrance is experiencing the full brunt of the current economic down-turn.

To ensure that the budget remained in balance for FY 2010-11, the City Council approved the deletion of 40 budgeted positions, the phase-in of transferring employee portion of pension costs back to employees, the elimination of potential wage and materials increases, and the approval of operational efficiencies in the Fire Prevention Bureau through civilianization of two sworn positions. In addition, the City Council had to cut some popular programs and services to city residents, including the 4th of July celebration at Wilson Park and the Rose Parade float. The float has been funded through 2012 to provide an opportunity to identify a new funding source.

The City Council limited fee increases to three categories: certain recreation classes based on a market study, DVD rental and late charges, and the expansion of a short-term permit fee to include additional park facilities.

The City continues to pursue an active economic development program to bring new businesses to the City and to revitalize the downtown area with the goal of creating a retail destination of specialty boutiques complimented by a vibrant dining district. In addition, the City is pursuing a policy of energy efficiencies that should result in savings for years to come.

Experts have been cautious about forecasting an economic recovery and Torrance may be facing leaner budgets for several years to come. You can expect that the City of Torrance will continue to monitor the economic situation carefully and the City Council will take action as soon as it is needed. For more information regarding the City's budget, follow the link below:

http://www.TorranceCa.gov/Documents/2010-11_2ndYr_BudgetAtAGlance.pdf

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